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Mr J Marincowitz
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Dear Mr Marincowitz

Ofsted subject inspection programme – Music

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with Marian Harker HMI to look at work in music on Wednesday 24 and Thursday 25 January 2007.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil was benefiting from your music provision. In particular, it sought to explore the links you may have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. I would certainly hope to use some of the outstanding practice observed during our visit in such a case study. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of work, observation of five lessons and a range of extra-curricular ensembles, discussions with some of the boys and representatives of outside agencies associated with music at Queen Elizabeth's school. Audio and video recordings of the boys' work and past ensemble performances were also scrutinised.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in music are outstanding at all key stages.

- Relative to their starting points, all boys make at least good progress. Those who play a musical instrument make outstanding progress due to the wide range of performance opportunities available in the school.
- Standards of extra-curricular ensembles are outstanding. Boys perform to a very high standard, with sensitivity and musical expression.
- The personal development of boys is outstanding. Their attitudes to music and their behaviour are consistently exemplary. They work well together in class and show consideration and respect for each other and adults. It is clear that Queen Elizabeth's school is enabling its students to become confident, articulate, mature young men.

Quality of teaching and learning in music

The quality of teaching and learning are outstanding.

- Teachers have considerable subject knowledge, prepare thoroughly and support individuals well.
- Assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good, regular and informative, if slightly over-generous at Key Stage 3. However, learning objectives in lessons are not specific enough for teachers to accurately assess their intended outcomes.
- Support and guidance are outstanding. All boys are very well supported. Of note is the high calibre of support provided for instrumentalists in lessons and ensembles.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the music curriculum is outstanding, especially the extra-curricular provision.

- Performing, listening and composing are strong features of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Singing is less well represented.
- Key Stage 3 schemes of work are clearly progressive for performing and listening, but less so for composing.
- All boys have access to a wide range of bands, orchestras and choirs and other ensembles.

Leadership and management of music

- The leadership of music is outstanding, dedicated and held in high regard within the school and the wider community.
- Management of music is not quite as strong, as self-evaluation is too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.

Subject issues

Data collection

A good range of music data from classroom and extra-curricular work is collected regularly and used to inform planning. This includes data collected when boys start the school in Year 7 and baseline music tests are carried out. These baseline tests are used extensively to measure pupils' progress. However, the accuracy and validity of the test is insecure. Good baseline testing is currently used by other departments in the school and requires disseminating.

Partnership Links

Partnerships with outside agencies are outstanding. All commented positively on the impact of Queen Elizabeth's school on their organisation in raising standards and awareness.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

There is a strong ethos for music in the school which has been enhanced by the music specialist school status. A very high percentage of boys are involved in musical activities. All boys are valued as individuals. There is a high level of mutual respect and understanding for the wide range of cultures represented within the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising the profile of singing across the curriculum
- ensuring there is a clear progression of composing skills throughout the Key Stage 3 curriculum
- ensuring lessons at all key stages have clearly focused learning objectives.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector